

Bill Introduced in U.S. House of Representatives to Establish New National Park Unit in Blackstone River Valley

Legislation Would Help Preserve, Protect and Interpret Nationally Significant Resources and Promote Educational & Recreational Experiences in RI and MA
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WASHINGTON, DC – Advancing efforts to preserve, protect, and interpret nationally significant resources throughout the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor, promote economic development opportunities, and enhance historic and natural resources of the Blackstone Valley, U.S. Representative David Cicilline (D-RI), along with co-sponsors Richard E. Neal (D-MA), James McGovern (D-MA), and James Langevin (D-RI), introduced legislation to create the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. This legislation was also introduced in the Senate today by U.S. Senators Jack Reed (D-RI), John Kerry (D-MA), Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI), and Scott Brown (R-MA).

Spanning from Worcester, MA to Providence, RI, the Blackstone River Valley is the Birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution. The Valley's beauty and history embodies a landscape rich in natural, historic, and cultural treasures. If enacted, the legislation introduced today would help preserve these icons of industry, environment, and history for generations to come.

"I am proud to introduce legislation that will create a new national park unit within the Blackstone River Valley, ensuring the protection and promotion of this vital historical, environmental, and educational resource – all while helping to promote our local economies," said Rep. Cicilline. "The Valley embodies and unites two important pieces of our past and our future – that of industry and environment. For generations men, women, and children have come to this place to enjoy the region's natural beauty and learn of the revolution that propelled our nation's economy – and this legislation will help preserve these experiences for years to come."

"For many years, I have been an enthusiastic and outspoken supporter of the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor. The corridor is a special place that celebrates the region's history, heritage and culture. It is also a magnificent natural resource that is enjoyed by thousands of people each year. I visited Lookout Rock in Northbridge this week and strongly support the bipartisan effort in Congress to make the corridor part of the National Park System," said Congressman Richard E. Neal (D-MA).

"Creating a national park in the Blackstone Valley would be a tremendous boost to our local economy," Rep. McGovern said. "As the birthplace of the American Industrial Revolution, the Valley holds a special place in our history – and our future. I'm very pleased to be a co-sponsor of this legislation."

“The Blackstone Valley Corridor, home to the industrial revolution, has long been a source of pride for Rhode Island, but is also now recognized by the National Park Service for its historical significance. I look forward to the Corridor’s inclusion in the National Park System to preserve the historical sites that shaped our nation and to encourage more Americans from across the country to visit and tour Rhode Island,” said Congressman James Langevin (D-RI).

Established by Congress in November 1986, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor now includes all or part of twenty-four communities extending from Worcester, MA to Providence, RI. The Corridor contains approximately 400,000 acres of land in total. In July of this year, the National Park Service released a Special Resource Study for the purpose of determining whether the resources evaluated in the Heritage Corridor meet the criteria for inclusion as a unit of the National Park System. The study was completed following extensive input from local stakeholders, the Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor Commission, National Park Service staff, and historians.

Drawing from the Special Resource Study, the legislation introduced today would establish a new unit of the National Park System to be known as the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Historical Park. The Park would be comprised of sites and districts in both Rhode Island and Massachusetts including the Blackstone River and its tributaries; the Blackstone Canal; the non-contiguous nationally significant historic districts of Old Slater Mill in Pawtucket; the villages of Slatersville (in North Smithfield) and Ashton (in Cumberland) Rhode Island; and Whitinsville and Hopedale in Massachusetts.